

May 5, 2019

Dear Judge Hilton,

I am the aunt of Chelsea Manning and have known Chelsea since she was born. Chelsea lived with me for many months before enlisting in the U.S. Army, and I spent time with her on a number of occasions during the court-martial. Although I saw her several times after her release, I have neither seen or spoken with her since last summer. We have had no discussions concerning her possible testimony to the Grand Jury.

Chelsea grew up under difficult conditions, with two alcoholic parents who provided little emotional support during her childhood. They then subjected her to a messy divorce in her preteen years, which eventually resulted in her mother taking Chelsea (Bradley at that time), age 13, back to her mother's hometown in Wales. In Wales, she was subjected to bullying from classmates not only because of her accent, her inability to speak Welsh, and so on but also because she was clearly a "different" type of person. During her time in Wales, her mother was hospitalized for complications from alcoholism, and Chelsea took it upon herself to try to mitigate the consequences to her mother from her alcoholism. When she finished school at 17, she moved to Oklahoma to live with her father. There, she encountered abuse from his wife with little protection provided by her father. When this became too much to endure, she left home and, as a result of an open invitation, moved in with my family. She remained with us, working every day and saving her money, until she enlisted in the Army.

Based on all that I know about Chelsea, I can say with absolute certainty that she is a person who lives by her beliefs. She risked much to draw attention to what she believed were unlawful actions by allied forces in Iraq. She spent nearly seven years in federal custody, enduring in some instances most difficult conditions, including solitary confinement. It is most unlikely that continued incarceration in an attempt to obtain her testimony will have any effect on her willingness to testify. In fact, I am absolutely certain that she will endure indefinite confinement rather than comply with an order to testify.

I may not agree with all of Chelsea's decisions, but she is an honorable person with a strong belief in justice. I request that you consider her background and current state of mind and, after that consideration, conclude that continued incarceration is pointless.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Debra Van Alstyne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Debra" being more prominent than the last name.

Debra Van Alstyne